

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 9984

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, GR

SUBJECT: FATHERS AND SONS; THE COURSE OF GREEK YOUTH

1. IT IS THE SEASON FOR GREEK S TO TALK ABOUT GREEK YOUTH. THE CURRENT INTEREST IS STIMULATED BY THE DECEMBER 15 UNIVERSITY STUDENT ELECTIONS WHICH ONCE AGAIN RETURNED AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY FOR THE GREEK LEFT. GREEKS, AND THOSE LIKE THE UNITED STATES WHO ARE INTERESTED IN BUILDING A LONG TERM CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH THIS COUNTRY, MUST CONCERN THEMSELVES WITH THE MEANING OF THE STRONG LEFTIST SHOWING AT THE UNIVERSITIES.

2. THE FACTS ARE THESE: IN THE DECEMBER 15 ELECTIONS FOR STUDENT COUNCILS AT EACH SEPARATE SCHOOL AND FACULTY THROUGHOUT GREECE, THE GREEK LEFT RETAINED SOME 80 PERCENT OF THE SEATS. STILL INCOMPLETE RESULTS INDICATE THAT THE PASOK STUDENT ORGANIZATION JUST NOSED OUT THAT OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE EXTERIOR FOR FIRST PLACE. THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE

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INTERIOR'S ORGANIZATION FINISHED A NOT TOO DISTANT

THIRD. SURPRISINGLY, THE STUDENT FORCES OF PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS' NEW DEMOCRACY PARTY RAN A VERY RESPECTABLE RACE AND FINISHED FOURTH. OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES, INCLUDING THE CENTER UNION NEW FORCES, AND THE NUMEROUS POLITICAL SPLINTER GROUPS RAN WELL BEHIND THESE FOUR ORGANIZATIONS. ABSTENTION WAS DOWN, COMPARED TO LAST YERR. WITH ACTIVE UNIVERSITY ENROLLMENT OF ABOUT 92,000 PARTICIPATION IN THE ELECTIONS NEARLY DOUBLED FROM 1974 REACHING 43,000 OR ABOUT 46 PCT OF THOSE ELIGIBLE.

3. THE RAW FACTS ARE THUS INCONTESTABLE. SO, TOO, ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THIS GENERATION OF STUDENTS AND THE GENERATION OF THEIR FATHERS. IT WOULD ONLY BE EXTRA-ORDINARY IF THEY WERE NOT:

- THEIR FATHERS' GREECE WAS AN UNDERDEVELOPED, TRADITIONAL SOCIETY. THEIR GREECE IS A RAPIDLY MODERNIZING SOCIETY, SUBJECT TO THE OPPORTUNITIES AND THE FRUSTRATIONS PECULIAR TO MODERN SOCIETIES EVERYWHERE.
- THEIR FATHERS' UNIVERSITIES WERE FAR SMALLER AFFAIRS RESERVED FOR THE UPPER AND UPPER MIDDLE CLASSES. GREEK UNIVERSITIES HAVE TRIPLED IN SIZE IN TWENTY YEARS AND THEIR STUDENT BODIES HAVE BEEN OPENED TO THE MIDDLE AND LOWER MIDDLE CLASSES.
- THEIR FATHERS WERE TRAUMATIZED BY THE GREEK CIVIL WAR. HISTORY IS THE VICTOR'S POLEMIC AND FOR THE FATHERS THE CIVIL WAR IS A MEMORY OF COMMUNIST BARBARIANISM. THE STUDENTS HAVE NO PERSONAL MEMORY OF THE CIVIL WAR. THEY CAME TO THEIR POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS UNDER THE JUNTA, AND WERE SEARED BY CYPRUS.
- THEIR PARENTS SAW AMERICA AS GREECE'S SAVIOR. THIS GENERATION BLAMES THE U.S. FOR THE JUNTA AND FOR CYPURS. THEIR PARENTS VIEWS WERE SHAPED BY AMERICANS' POSITIVE VIEWS OF AMERICA. THIS GENERATION IS PRIVY TO OUR SELF DOUBTS (WHEN THEIR PARENTS WENT TO THE MOVIES THEY SAW ROCK HUDSON AND DORIS DAY, WHEN THESE KIDS GO TO THE MOVIES THEY SEE "EASY RIDER" AND "HEARTS AND MINDS").

4. SHAPED BY A DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE, THIS GENERATION OF POLITICALLY ACTIVE STUDENTS IS READY TO REJECT MUCH

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OF THE WORLD THEY INHERITED FROM THEIR FATHERS. THEY REJECT "BOURGEOIS SOCIETY" AND "CAPITALISM", AND REVILE AMERICA. IN OUR ADMITTEDLY LIMITED EXPERIENCE, THIS IS NOT, HOWEVER, A MATTER OF COLLAPSE OF THE TRADITIONAL FAMILY. IN MANY CASES RADICAL YOUTH SEEM TO LIVE TOGETHER WITH THEIR FAMILIES IN THE TRADITIONAL MANNER, ACCEPTING THE USUAL GREEK FILIAL DUTIES. WHAT THEY REJECT IS THE SOCIETY IN WHICH THE FAMILY IS OPERATING.

THE CHILDREN OF THE UPPER AND UPPER MIDDLE CLASSES SEEM TO BE THE CUTTING EDGE OF THIS REJECTIONIST MOOD. FOR THEIR PARENTS, HAVING RADICAL CHILDREN HEIGHTENS CONCERN ABOUT THE "COMMUNIST DANGER". BUT IT IS THE IMPRIMATUR OF THIS ELITE GROUP THAT HELPS TO MAKE "SOCIALISM" (WHICH VERY FEW GREEK STUDENTS UNDERSTAND) AND ANTI-AMERICANISM "TRENDY" AND WIDELY ACCEPTED.

5. THE SHORT TERM POLITICAL MEANING OF ALL THIS WOULD SEEM INDISPUTABLE. MOST IMMEDIATE AND MOST SIGNIFICANT IS THE INSTANCE OF A LARGE BODY OF POLITICALLY ACTIVE STUDENTS READY FOR MOBILIZATION BY THE LEFT, AND THE EXTREME REVOLUTIONARY LEFT. AN ABILITY TO MOBILIZE STREET DEMONSTRATIONS IS NOT AN INSIGNIFICANT WEAPON IN GREECE AND ONE THAT THE GOVERNMENT MUST CONFRONT CAREFULLY. (IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE IN THIS CONNECTION THAT LAST WEEK FOR THE FIRST TIME THE GOVERNMENT FACED DOWN A THREAT BY THE STUDENTS. UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THEIR NATIONAL STUDENT ORGANIZATION, THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN ATHENS THREATENED TO DEFEY A GOVERNMENT AND ON STREET DEMONSTRATION. THE GOVERNMENT STUCK TO ITS GUNS AND THE ORGANIZERS OF THE RALLY BACKED DOWN AT THE VERY LAST MINUTE WITHOUT TESTING THE AUTHORITIES'S RESOLVE.)

6. THE LONGER RUN IMPLICATIONS ARE MORE INTERESTING, AND HARDER TO DIVINE. OF COURSE, EACH POLITICAL GROUP IS STIRING THE TEA LEAVES TO BREW AN INTERPRETATION THAT MEETS ITS TASTES. THE LEFT READS THAT THE WINDS OF CHANGE ARE BLOWING IN ITS DIRECTION. THE RIGHT POINTS TO THE RESURGENCE OF NEW DEMOCRACY AND THE STILL LARGE ABSTENTION, WHICH, IT ARGUES IS A SILENT MAJORITY LEANING ITS WAY.

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7. THE LEFT IS PROBABLY WRONG, ASSUMING GREEK DEMOCRACY AND THE GREEK ECONOMY CONTINUE TO BE STRENGTHENED. IN ANY CASE, YOUTH DOES GROW UP. TO PARAPHRASE CHURCHILL, A YOUNG MAN WHO IS NOT A COMMUNIST AT TWENTY HAS NO HEART. IF HE IS STILL A COMMUNIST AT THIRTY, HE HAS NO MIND. MOREOVER, CONSERVATIVES SHOWED NEW STRENGTH IN THE ELECTIONS. IF AND WHEN GREECE SUCCEEDS AS A MODERN, ECONOMICALLY PROSPEROUS DEMOCRACY, MOST OF THE STUDENTS WILL BE SOCIALIZED INTO THAT SOCIETY. UNDER THIS SCENARIO, STUDENTS WILL BE A TROUBLESOME GROUP BUT ULTIMATELY WILL BE DIGESTED. A COMFORTING PROSPECT, IN WHICH STUDENTS ARE A DEPENDENT VARIABLE, AND IN WHICH GRADUALNESS IS INEVITABLE.

8. BUT IF IT IS WRONG TO SEE THE STUDENTS AS A RED SEA SWEEPING GREEKS TO A REVOLUTIONARY FUTURE, IT IS JUST AS WRONG TO BELIEVE THAT THE GREECE THE STUDENTS IDENTIFYING WITH THE LEFT WILL HELP TO SHAPE WILL BE LIKE THE ONE THEY INHERITED. THIS GROUP DOES REJECT THE GREECE OF THEIR FATHERS, AND THAT REJECTION WILL PLAY A ROLE AS THEY MOVE TO LEADERSHIP OF THE COUNTRY. AND, OF MORE DIRECT INTEREST TO THE UNITED STATES, THEY ALSO REJECT THEIR FATHERS' VIEW OF AMERICA, AND THE RELATIONSHIP THAT WAS BUILT UP OVER MORE THAN TWENTY-FIVE YEARS WITH OUR COUNTRY. AS THIS GROUP COMES TO MATURITY, IT WILL BE FAR HARDER TO SUSTAIN THE TIES OF CONFIDENCE AND MUTUAL SUPPORT THAT HAVE BOUND US FOR MANY YEARS. EVEN IF CYPRUS AND THE AEGEAN WERE TO VANISH AS ISSUES, THIS GENERATION'S FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT VIEW OF AMERICA WILL REMAIN - AND THIS IS WHERE THE "GENERATION GAP" HAS ITS GREATEST SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE U.S., IN THIS SMALL BUT SENSITIVE CORNER OF EUROPE. KUBISCH

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